BULLETIN

OF THE

MADRAS GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

EDITED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

POSSIBLE SUMERIAN SURVIVALS IN TODA RITUAL

By

H.R.H. PRINCE PETER OF GREECE, M.A. (Hry.), LLD.

With an Introduction and Notes

by

A. AIYAPPAN, M.A., PH.D.,

Superintendent, Madras Government Museum

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FOREWORD

In the field work tradition of Anthropology, it is a well known fact that unless the field worker establishes a good rapport it is not quite easy to elicit data on certain sensitive cultural domains of an ethnic group, especially on their religious organisation. But, even such tasks become a child's play for H.R.H. Prince Peter of Greece, as he had won over the hearts of the Toda Tribes of the Nilgiris by his sincere efforts to ameliorate their hard living conditions during his stay there.

So many fascinating theories on the origin of the Todas have been put forth by scholars ever since their presence was revealed to the outside world by the Europeans. For instance, we can mention the Jewish affiliations attributed by the Portuguese Missionaries, Syrian Christian affinities proposed by the Syrian Christians of the then Malabar Coast, to quote a few. However, it is an accepted fact that sufficient materials are still not available to come to any definite conclusions on the origins of the Todas. The Todas themselves have become so much assimilated or mainstreamed with the rest of society as a result of economic and social development after Independence. This entirely voluntary development has been a result of a combination of their own efforts and the special concessions that the Indian state has given to such ethnic groups to facilitate their economic and social upliftment. It is very difficult to separately identify them, except on certain religious and social occasions, when their customs and practices can still be seen. Even these are likely to disappear due to the forces of Westernisation or Sanskritisation or its Tamil equivalent Tamilisation. At such a juncture, books like the present one become irreplaceable. They become the only sources of ancient knowledge.

The present monograph by Prince Peter of Greece has favoured a possible Sumerian - Toda connection that remains till date a current topic of debate among the Anthropologists – similar to the famous proposition of ascribing Negroid features to the Kadar Tribes of South India. However, the readers may get enthralled to know from Prince Peter that eleven names of gods and goddesses of Sumerian Origin are still attested in the religious organisation of the Todas. The clear cut phonetic correspondence such as -

Sumerian	Toda
Anu/An - refers to the 'Name of Principal God'	*On* (From Pre-Toda *An* idem)/ *An* idem.
Nintud refers to the 'Virgin Mother goddess'	*Nintud* idem
Enlil/Ellil refers to the 'Earth God'	*Enlil/Ellil* idem
Ninlil refers to the 'Consort of Earth God'	*Ninlil* idem
Sin refers to the 'Moon God'	*Sin* (From Tamil:*Tingal* idem) idem
Ninurtha/Ninurtha refers to the 'War God'	*Ninurtha* idem

cannot be easily brushed aside.

This monograph by Prince Peter gets a special position by the 'Introductory' remarks from Prof. A. Aiyappan, the then Superintendent of Madras Government Museum who himself is an acclaimed Anthropologist of great reputation.

I hope that this reprint of the monograph by Prince Peter of Greece which was out of print and stock for a quite a long time will fulfill the long felt need of ethnographers, in general and comparative religionists, in particular.

CHENNAI-6000 08
15-3-2002 AD

(Dr.R.Kannan,Ph.D., I.A.S.)

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INTRODUCTION

The Todas are the best known of all Indian tribes : the literature on the Todas is voluminous and the popular interest in them has always been great for a variety of reasons. In spite of these advantages, the Todas today are face to face with extinction, their conditions of life deplorable, and the willingness to help them almost absent. As a people they are aristocratic but secretive about the more intimate aspects of their religious life and not quite easy for anthropological investigations, for which reason, there are several major gaps in our information about Toda ritual, belief and mythology. These gaps were indicated about fifty years ago by W. H. R. Rivers in his most able study of the Todas. Investigations into the language and culture of the Todas were made by Dr. M. B. Emeneau of Yale University about fifteen years ago and a number of papers by this brilliant anthropologist have advanced and clarified our knowledge of the Todas. Of particular interest is his discovery of matrilineal sibs alongside of the patrilineal sibs described by Rivers. Toda religion still remains inadequately investigated. There is urgent need, therefore, for intensified effort in this field, as the human repositories of traditional lore are getting depopulated at a rate which causes concern in the minds of the most optimistic friends of the Todas. With the steady increase in the death-rate over birth-rate, the Todas, as a people, may not survive long unless a miracle happens. The Government of Madras and non-official social service agencies are making an effort to save the tribe from the ravages of syphilis, but while wishing them success, one cannot overlook the pressing urgency of making a complete record of those aspects of Toda culture of which our data are defective or incomplete.

H.R.H. Prince Peter of Greece has been interesting himself in the study of the Todas for over a decade now. Friends of the Todas and anthropologists all over the world owe him a debt of gratitude for the efforts he has made to ameliorate the conditions of the Todas. The discovery of the sacred names of the gods and goddesses of the Todas, now published in this special number of the *Madras Museum Bulletin* was possible, I venture to think, solely because of the confidence Prince Peter was able to create in the minds of the Todas. I am thankful to him for the privilege he has given the Madras Museum of publishing his paper. For over six decades from the time Dr. Edgar Thurston made the Madras Museum a centre of anthropological research, we have been doing

our best, of course in an academic way, for the tribes of the Madras State, the latest contribution being my *Report on the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Aboriginal Tribes of the Madras Province* (Government Press, Madras). We, thus, value this paper not only as a contribution to anthropology, but also as an indirect means of advancing the cause of the Todas.

Questions of Toda origins have been discussed ever since Europeans came into contact with this tribe. Portuguese missionaries of the sixteenth century were the first to try to verify the popular stories about the Jewish affiliations of the Todas. The Syrian Christians of the Malabar Coast, it is recorded, believed that the Todas were the Syrian followers of St. Thomas! In 1603, Finicio, a Portuguese missionary in Malabar, visited the Todas with the help of guides provided by the Chief of Mannarghat, questioned them about their faith, and returned home thoroughly disappointed as he found Toda practices shocking and most un-Christian. Several other theories are referred to at pp. 1-2 by the author, but most of them are of the bazaar variety, amusing and indicative of popular interest. Origins are always a difficult problem but particularly so in the present case, where archaeological and comparative information on most points of interest is riddled with lacunae. I do not think that we have sufficient material at our disposal for any serious discussion of Toda origins at the present moment, but Prince Peter's discovery of Sumerian names for Toda deities raises several questions of interest to some of which I should like to refer in the course of this brief introduction.

What do we know of the history of the Todas? A Mysore inscription of 1117 A.D. refers to a Hoysala general frightening the Todas; this is the earliest epigraphical reference to the Todas. Archaeological remains of the Nilgiris consist mostly of funerary monuments which have been described in some detail by J. W. Breeks who was Commissioner of the Nilgiris. As early as 1871, most of these burials "had been opened by private individuals and their contents dispersed far and wide." From about forty-two burials which Breeks opened, a large number of terracotta figurines of men and animals, peculiar tiered pottery with lids surmounted by figurines, iron weapons, knives and razors, bronze and pottery reliquaries with human bones, beads of agate, carnelian, glass, gold, etc., and ornaments of gold, bronze and iron were recovered. The relics in the bronze vases were most often pieces of skull bones. The practice of depositing beads of stone and gold, with burnt human relics is significantly reminiscent of the Indian Buddhist custom. The consensus of opinion seems inclined to regard

the barrows of the Nilgiris as those of the ancestors of the Todas though the latter deny any association with those monuments. In this cultural amnesia the Todas, however, do not stand alone. The funerary monuments of their ancestors have become "graves of monkeys" and "houses of Pandavas" to the present-day Tamils, references to ancient burial customs in classical literature alone coming to the rescue of the archaeologist against the misleading growth of popular tradition after these customs have gone out of vogue. If folk memory can be so weak in the case of literate Tamils, we cannot expect the less advanced Todas to know the truth about the relics of their own past. Breeks has given the arguments for and against the view that the barrows are Toda structures. Recently I re-examined the Breeks collection of antiquities from the Nilgiris in the Madras Museum, and my general impression supports the opinion of Breeks. The terracotta figurines of human beings, particularly male figurines, have the characteristic Toda beard but not the *putkuli* (mantle), the men and women being represented only with the loin cloth. Figurines of the Toda buffalo turn up in dozens from the graves and are invariably well made ; these figurines serve to clinch the issues regarding the authorship of the barrows.

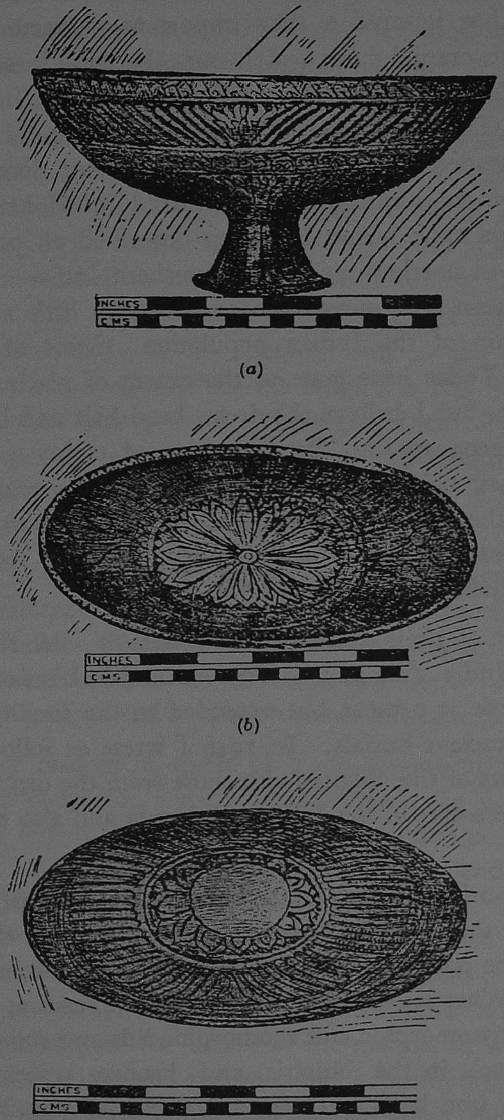
Further examination of the finds from the graves would throw more light on the past of the Todas, if, of course, the view stated in the foregoing paragraph is correct. In the human figurines, the hair is done into a knot at the back or top of the head and kept in place by a broad fillet (cf. the wellknown sculpture of the nobleman of Mohenjo-Daro). The male figurines, whether seated, standing or equestrian, have a cross-band on the chest and back and are armed with daggers and rectangular shields ; in some cases the daggers are stuck into the waistband on the right. The Todas are now strangers to weapons of offence, even the bow and arrow used in the paternity rites being just toy instruments, but the weapons represented in the figurines and their ritual counterparts in metal suggest a more martial past. It is possible that the Todas maintained their mastery over the Nilgiris by the strength of arms.

Female figurines are few in number and these have meagre indications of ornaments. The earlobes (and also the helix in one case) have been pierced, presumably to take ornaments. Actual bracelets, ear-rings, finger-rings, etc., have been found, but these are plain and tell us very little. Articles of toilette, such as bone combs, collyrium rods and razors, fragments of silks, enormous agate beads and barrel beads of carnelian with glazed white inlay ornamentation, give us an inkling into the fashions of the Todas of the past.

Unique among the grave goods of the barrows of the Nilgiris are the beautiful ornamented bronze bowls, five of them provided with pedestals. Their design, decorative pattern and finish are so exquisite as to compel admiration. Breeks has figured them in his work on the Nilgiris, and as I propose sometime in the near future, to devote an entire paper to describe them, I have figured only the best of the series here [fig. 1, (*a*), (*b*), (*c*)]. Another small vessel shaped like a bud on a pedestal, which probably served as a receptacle for collyrium demonstrates the high level of artistic attainment of the craftsman who made it for the Todas. One cannot help suggesting that these bronze vases were treasured heirlooms in Toda families, buried as grave goods when some celebrity passed away.

It may not be out of place in this context to draw the attention of the reader to the close resemblance between the bowl figured here and a somewhat smaller fluted oval bowl of gold from the grave of the chief, Mes-kalam-dug at Ur-of-the-Chaldees, figures of which were first published by Woolley in the *Illustrated London News* of December 17, 1927, p. 1902. The details such as the fluting, the band of incised lines round the margin, the petals of the floral patterns, etc., are so similar in the two specimens as to give us the impression of a common source of artistic inspiration for both. On this point I am in full agreement with Mr. F. J. Richards who was the first to notice the points of similarity in the two bowls (*Man*, 1931, p. 203). As we have not yet got the archaeological data to date the burials of the Nilgiris, it is not possible at present to give them a tentative date. But as iron objects occur in most of them, they cannot be earlier than the first millennium B.C., while the Ur graves are of 2500 B.C. Any satisfactory explanation of this chronological gap will be possible only if further work is done in the Nilgiris. My friend Mr. G. N. Das has been exploring the Nilgiris and I hope he would be able to discover some undisturbed cairns which can be excavated on modern lines.

In discussing Toda affiliations, definite information about the racial status of the tribe is essential, but the material available is indeed scanty. The most recent anthropometric study of the tribe is that of Baron von Eickstedt whose conclusions have been published but not the figures on which they are based. Von Eickstedt considers that the Todas belong to the " North Indid " type to which also belong the Sikhs and several other hairy, robust, high-statured, light-skinned groups of Afghanistan, Kashmir, Punjab and Rajputana who were, originally pastoral tribes of Central Asia, patrilineal and speaking Aryan tongues. " In the Todas of the Nilgiris " according to this anthropologist " this type



(c)

FIG. 1.—BRONZE VASE FROM ANCIENT GRAVES, NILGIRIS—
(a) SIDE VIEW OF THE VASE AND PEDESTAL.
(b) VIEW OF THE INSIDE OF THE VASE.
(c) BOTTOM AND OUTER SURFACE OF THE VASE.

remained isolated and have maintained a remarkable racial purity." Von Eickstedt, however, has ignored a very important characteristic of the Toda head, namely, its high cranial vault which puts the tribe in a different category from the dominant North Indian groups with which he has, I am afraid, wrongly clubbed the Todas. The Todas, on the other hand, are more correctly comparable to the " long-headed race, with high cranial vault, long face and narrow prominent nose," which, numerically, dominated in Mohenjo-Daro from its earliest phases. This type which has been described as proto-Mediterranean is widely distributed in northern as well as southern India. In the Toda tribe, the proto-Mediterranean type is represented with very little admixture with the proto-Australoid strain of the Indian population. Some of the authors who have written on the Todas have gone to the extent of placing them in a racial category of their own, but I believe the dress, head-hair and beard of the Todas account for this misconception. Breeks observed eighty years ago that the Todas looked like their neighbours when they put on the costume of the latter. When I saw some of the Todas who came recently to Madras to wait in deputation on Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Indian Union, I recalled the remarks of Breeks and felt convinced he was right.*

In most aspects of their culture, the Todas fit into the general cultural pattern of Southern India (see p. 3). This cultural link is not confined to what we are able to observe at present but extended to the forgotten culture of the past as revealed in ancient burials. In 1946 I wrote as follows comparing the finds from the barrows of the Nilgiris with those from the urn burials of Adichanallur at the extreme south of the Indian peninsula and also the Asur graves in Chotanagpur :—

> Taking however for comparison the burials of the Nilgiris and Adichanallur, it is patent that there is little in common between the pottery of the two sites, the pottery of the Nilgiris looking almost exotic and difficult to place. What strikes attention is the occurrence at both the places of elaborate phytomorphic and zoomorphic lids and stands for the smaller pottery vessels in the Nilgiris and bronze vessels at Adichanallur. Bronze and iron bells and representations of the buffalo, an animal of great ritual significance in the Nilgiris, occur at both the places.

* After the typescript of this introduction was sent to the Press, H.R.H. Prince Peter drew my attention to Cipriani's study of the Todas published in *Archivio per l'Anthropologia e la Etnologia*, Vol. LXVII—1937. I have not been able to get a copy of the article but understand that the conclusions are to the effect that among the Todas the South Indian type is dominant.

> Passing from the south to the Asur sites in Chotanagpur one is again struck by the common factors between them and the burials of the Nilgiris. The Asur burials consisting of cinerary urns and grave goods deposited under a low dolmen-like structure are somewhat different from the barrows of the Nilgiris, but the bronze vases from both show a general similarity ; circular punch marks are a common feature of the pottery ; the bronze has a high percentage of tin, 29·89 per cent in the Nilgiris and 23.8 per cent at the Asur sites ; and at both the sites are found small metal bells associated at present among Central Indian and Nilgiris tribes with cattle gods. The differences also should not be overlooked particularly in the pottery and in the orientation of the slabstone on the graves which in the Nilgiris is NE-SW, but E-W in the case of the Asur graves. The significance of the few points of resemblance becomes all the greater if we recall to mind the possibility that the makers of these monuments were Dravidian-speaking communities.*

In the course of the same address I pointed out incidentally the existence of the Toda mode of salutation by placing the foot on the head, among some of the tribes of Central India. Going further afield into the surviving pocket of Dravidian speech in Baluchistan, I was surprised to find that the *chedak* of the Brahui nomads and the Toda funeral circles were used alike for funeral gatherings.

Having carried my readers in quest of Toda origins to Baluchistan and Indus Valley, I should pause for a moment to remind the sceptic that there is nothing wild in the hypothesis put forward here of the possibility of Toda contacts with Sumeria. Facts are often stranger than fiction and it is no wonder that we often find it difficult to consider as likely the proofs of trans-continental and trans-oceanic movements of prehistoric communities. A few years ago, most of us considered as fantastic the view that Indian culture in any direct way influenced the Maya civilization, but a recent exhibition in the American Museum of Natural History which showed the details of the manner in which Indian art motifs were copied by the Mayas and the very able exposition of the subject by Prof. R. von Heine-Geldern have convinced us that there was traffic by sea between India and South America several centuries before the so-called discovery of America. Indo-Sumerian affinities are among the accepted facts of Indian

* "The Megalithic Culture of Southern India" : Presidential address to the Section of Anthropology and Archaeology of the Indian Science Congress, 1945. *Proc. Indian Sc. Congress*, Calcutta, 1945.

and Mesopotamian archaeology, and their extension to the Toda enclave in Southern India, though somewhat difficult at present, is a relatively simple problem which some concentrated research might resolve in the near future.

The general belief among anthropologists, archaeologists and linguists today is that the language of the majority in Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro should have been Dravidian. Apart from the presence of an island of Dravidian Brahui in Baluchistan, there is evidence both direct and indirect, according to Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, of the presence of Dravidian speech in central, northern and even eastern India in addition to the solid block of Dravidian south of the Vindhyas. Space does not permit me to go into the manifold ways in which Dravidian influenced and even transformed the Aryan speech of the early Vedic period into Dravidianised Sanskrit. Readers interested in further study of the subject would do well to consult the works of Prof. Chatterji. According to the evidence of the Vedas, the natives who confronted the Aryan incursions into their territory were the Dasa-Dasyu people who had their counterparts in Iran and in the south-east of the Caspian, as shown by the linguistic survival *Daha*, *Dahyu*, in Iranian, and the Dahai people known to Greek tradition. Prof. Chatterji has made the suggestion that the cultural and racial fusion of the Dasa-Dasyu (Daha-Dahyu) people and the Aryans had started in Iran itself, for he sees the beginning of the Dravidianisation in the early Vedic speech. In modern Hinduism, most of the Vedic rituals, beliefs, gods and goddesses have disappeared, and yielded place to the *puja* rites and Dravidian deities. The great Asian mother-Goddess symbolized by her vehicle the lion and the father-god with the bull for his vehicle (Ma or Kubele and Atthis, or Hepit and Teshuo) are still the most important deities of India. Dravidian (=Tamil, Dravida, Dramila, Dramizha) origins, thus, have carried researchers far from its present habitat. Prof. Chatterji has drawn attention to the name *Trummili* (=Termilai of the Greeks) by which the Lycians of Asia Minor, a pre-Aryan Mediterranean people, called themselves, and to the resemblance of that name to Tamila. In view of the prehistoric contacts between the Indus Valley and the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the inference that might be drawn of possible identity of the linguistic fossil of Asia Minor with the living species of India is not likely to be so far-fetched as it might otherwise be. And the matter-of-fact sceptic should remember that we are dealing with prehistoric movements of the first architects of civilization within the region which archaeologists have regarded as the cradle of the higher culture of mankind.

Prince Peter has found eleven names of deities of Sumerian origin in use among the Todas. Of these, the authenticity of the names Ön and Sin can be accepted as established. I find it difficult to believe that his Toda informants could have all conspired to mislead him in the case of the other nine names! I have a lurking suspicion that " Sin " lies hidden in the Tamil word " Tingal " for the moon, but linguistics is a subject which I am not competent to discuss. If Prince Peter's discovery gets corroborated, we still have to answer a series of questions : How did these Sumerian names survive in such pure form among the Todas? Are only the names Sumerian or were the Todas themselves Sumerian in origin? All these questions cannot be answered satisfactorily before a great deal more of comparative studies of mythology and linguistics at both the Dravidian and Sumerian terminals are undertaken. My own feeling in the matter can be stated here for what it is worth. I find it difficult to believe that the Todas are Sumerians who got lost and somehow continued to live isolated in the Nilgiris. More probably they were the advance guard of the Dravidian-speakers from the west, who in the isolation of the Nilgiris failed unlike their followers elsewhere to get transformed in culture. Among the people of the Malabar coast also, Dravidian culture and institutions survive in a purer form the chief reason being the geographical isolation which led to relatively greater cultural conservation. Rivers was right, in a way, in regarding the Malayalis as the closest cultural allies of the Todas.

There seems to be more Sumerian elements in Indian religion than we are apt to suppose now. I have been struck by the similarity between the Indian Siva and the Sumerian god, Ningizzida [=Saham (fire), Serah (vegetation)], personification of the generative forces of nature. He is represented on cylinder seals with snakes in his hands ; sometimes, he is identified with the double coiled serpents ; he sleeps, ritually with his consort on a couch, as part of the annual fertility rites ; he wears a horned head-dress (*cf.* the Siva of Mohenjo-Daro). The Indian god has his snake ornaments, and his ritual connubium is still conducted with an image of his consort. Divested of syncretistic exuberance, Siva, like Ningizzida, is sanctified fertility in eternal connubium. While it may be argued that the serpent symbol and the sacralization of fertility are common to all parts of the world, parallelism in specialized ritual should be ascribed to a common source of inspiration and common tradition.

Siva is not an isolated instance of this parallelism. In Sumeria are found the analogues of Indian serpent spirits, human busts with snake tails and of the

Indian Narasimha (Lion-man) and the full-vessel (*purna-kalasa*). The Sumerian temple was organized as a royal palace. The South Indian temple likewise is *kovil* (the house of the king). If the Sumerian influence were wide-spread, primitive Toda culture was likely to have been part of that wide stream, not a bucketful that somehow got transported to the Nilgiris.

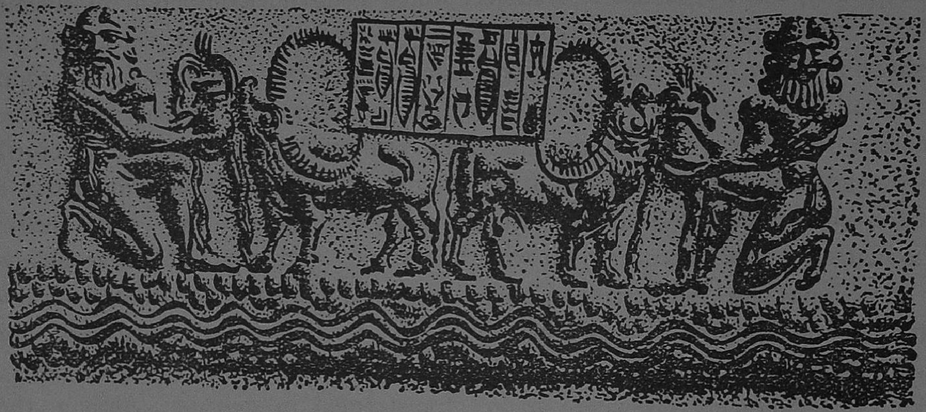


FIG. 2.—IMPRESSION OF AN AKKADIAN CYLINDER SEAL.

Concluding, I would ask the reader to have a look at the impression of an extremely well-made cylinder seal from the old Akkadian period, the original of which is in the Chicago Natural History Museum (fig. 2). It is reproduced as figure 7 in Jack Finegan's book " Light from the Ancient Past : the Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion " (1946). In the seal the bearded hero, probably a water spirit is " watering the buffaloes from a vase out of which flows two streams. The inscription in the panel names a certain scribe, Ibnisharrum, as the owner of the seal and dedicates it to Shargali-sharri, king of Akkad " (page 22). Who will say the hero here is not a Toda ?

GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, MADRAS,
5th May 1951.

A. AIYAPPAN,
Superintendent.

POSSIBLE SUMERIAN SURVIVALS IN TODA RITUAL

By

H.R.H. Prince Peter of Greece, LL.D., M.A. (Hry.), F.R.A.I.

(Participant in the Third Danish Expedition to Central Asia)

Ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Europeans for the first time came into contact with that strange tribe of South India, the Todas of the Nilgiris (the Blue Mountains of the Madras Presidency), the origin of those anthropologically aberrant people has remained an intriguing mystery. In physical appearance, in speech and customs, they seem to differ so considerably from their neighbours—and indeed from all other Indians throughout the country—that it is really not surprising that so much speculation should have taken place as to who these curious people are, as to wherefrom they can possibly have come. It is taken for granted at once that they cannot be indigenous.

This, however, is flatly contradicted by the Todas themselves, who insist that they are the Lords of the Soil in the Nilgiris, that they were created there by their gods and goddesses, and that they have always been in this beautiful spot since the beginning of the ages.

Many theories have been put forward as to what their supposed real origin may be. . Madame Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophism, was so intrigued by her first meeting with them, that she wrote a book on them, extolling nothing less than their divine nature, and their supernatural appearance and powers.

More sober descriptions and studies have successively considered them to be, perhaps, Scythians (Sacas) from an early invasion of India by these Central Asiatic people ; or the purest remnants of the Vedic Aryans, who, isolated in the Nilgiris for centuries, still practice customs described in the Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, such as Pandava polyandry and the like.

I have recently come across the theory that they are descendants of a special caste of royal palanquin-bearers of the Kandyan kings of Ceylon ; and the, no doubt, Mohammedan-inspired theory that the Todas are all that is left of the heirs of Alexander's

Macedonians is not unknown in the bazaar of Ootacamund, capital of the Nilgiris.

Because of the distinctive appearance especially of the men—rather heavy features, large hook noses and long, curly hair and beards—many have drawn an inference from the fact that an ancient Jewish colony survives in neighbouring Cochin, to advance the idea that the Todas are possibly a lost tribe of Israel.

More conservative theories have recently been put forward. The affinity of the Toda language to Canarese, and the presence in the Nilgiris of large numbers of emigrants from Mysore, such as the Badagas and the ordinary Mysorean cultivators, have led to the conclusion that the Todas are simply the remains of an early emigration from the immediate north. The fact that in none-too-distant Coorg, other people of distinctive appearance also live—who, at times, according to some, have invaded the Nilgiris—has contributed to the belief that the Todas are perhaps Coorgs.

Only lately, too, I was entertained by a well-known British resident of the Blue Mountains—a great *shikari* whose trophies profusely decorate the walls of his bungalow—with the notion that, since the shape of the Toda hut[1], of so characteristic a build, is somewhat similar to that of a Pallava monolithic shrine (Seventh century, A.D.) and since the buffaloes kept by the tribe are rather of the north than of the south Indian variety, the Todas must be surviving Pallavas who, after the disappearance of their empire, took refuge in the fastness of the Nilgiris.

More scientifically based hypotheses of the origin of the Todas are to be found in the writings of W. H. R. Rivers (*The Todas*, London 1906) and of M. B. Emeneau [" Language and social forms : A study of Toda kinship terms and dual descent ", *Language, Culture and Personality*, Menasha, Wisconsin (not dated), pp. 158 to 179].

The first of these two anthropologists, in a chapter of his monumental work, specially devoted to the question (Chap. XXX, p. 693), purposes to show that the Todas, failing anything of greater antiquity, can at least be traced back to Malabar. In support of this assertion, he gives evidence of the resemblance of Toda and Malabar social customs[2] : polyandry, intercaste concubinage, the giving of a piece of cloth by the bridegroom to the bride, the name for this cloth, *kach*, which is common to Toda and to Malayalam, the placing of a similar piece of cloth on the body of the dead relative at his cremation, the posthumous " marriage " of deceased, unwedded girls, and the

[1] Please see Editor's note 1 at p. 25.
[2] Do. 2 "

Nair ceremony of *pulikuti*, the name of which is reminiscent, he thinks, of the Toda ceremonial dairy, the *pülpali*.

He goes on to say that there is a definite affinity between Toda and Malayalam (although he does disclaim all knowledge of the language of Malabar, which, he rightly says, puts him at a disadvantage), and that it is a curious fact that the Toda diviners, the *teuols*, when prophesying, usually rave in Malayalam, which they profess not to know when they are their ordinary selves.[3]

He remarks that the Todas believe that their dead go west—which may or may not be a reminder of the path they travelled up to the Nilgiris—while a tall pole, the *tadri*, used by the Nilgiri tribe at its funerals, together with boxes called *pettei* and an umbrella called *mitukwadr*, all come from Malabar. Finally, Rivers shows the disposition of the Toda villages or munds (in Toda, *mad*) to be very suggestive of a gradual movement from west to east, with the latest Toda mund to be given up situated at Gudalur, on the Wynad plateau (although not in the Malabar taluk of that name), while some of the most sacred buffaloes are said to have come from Perithi in the Wynad taluk, where one of the principal Toda clans, Tarar, even claims to have its own private after-world.

To this evidence, Emeneau objects (p. 174) that, when properly examined, practically every piece of it proves to be invalid. He finds it more " profitable to look to a generalized South Indian background as a basis for the highly specialized and aberrant Toda culture forms ", and insists that what Rivers looked upon as parallels between Toda and Malabar cultures are really nothing else than common traits of such a generalized South Indian pattern.

He contests that Toda is akin to Malayalam, and finds it more closely related to Canarese (Kannada). That the Toda diviners speak the vernacular of Malabar when in a trance, he explains by their claiming spiritual communion with deities situated in Malabar temples. There is no linguistic connection whatsoever, he assures us, between *pulikuti* and *pülpali*.

As for the disposition of the munds, leading up from the western lowlands to the mountainous east, and the claim that certain sacred buffaloes came from the Wynad, he dismisses by revealing that the Gudalur settlement was a recent one and that sacred buffaloes are equally supposed to have come up from the eastern, Coimbatore (Tamil) side of the mountains. Emeneau concludes that it is evident that the general South Indian situation provides ample basis for the Toda developments.

[3] Please see Editor's note 3 at p. 25.

In the middle of the present century, the question of the origin of the Todas thus still remains an open one. Lacking so far, to a large extent, any real incontestable data to go by, it seems prudent to accept Emeneau's point of view of a general South Indian culture of which the Toda customs, even if somewhat aberrant, are really only a part. The mystery of the Todas' original home remains in its entirety, and speculation on this subject can go on unabated.

My research work on polyandry took me to the Nilgiris, first in 1939 and again in 1949, both times for an average period of study of four months. I also was intrigued by the striking appearance of the Todas, and apart from polyandry, by their original customs and ways.

The question of their origin naturally came to my mind as it had to so many others before, but I purposely tried to put it out of my thoughts as one difficult to solve and which would take far too much of the time I had available for my researches on polyandry. I was successful in 1939 in not touching the subject at all.

Last year (1949), however, a renewed acquaintance with the tribe gave me more leisure, and with the persistent rumour going about in Ootacamund that I was endeavouring to discover the origin of the singular tribe, coupled with the insistence of some of the European residents that I look into this intriguing problem, I found myself thinking it over at times, wondering what sort of data should be looked for that might dispel the mystery. I still resisted the temptation of taking up the matter seriously, as it appeared to me far too formidable a task for any one investigator to undertake.

On August 5th, 1949, I gave a lecture on the Todas at Government House, under the auspices of the Cultural Centre of the Indian Union Club. That was to be a turning point, because quite by accident, at that lecture, I stumbled across what proved to be later a rich vein of considerable information in the matter.

Paradoxically enough, I started my talk by insisting on my reluctance even to consider the question of origin. And this in spite of my listeners' obvious desire to hear about it (one of them had come up privately to me just before I started talking, to ask me if I would oblige him by stating what was known so far on the point). I finished that lecture with an impression in my mind which eventually proved to be a clue of no little importance.

When I came to the description of the Toda religion and was enumerating and explaining which were the gods of

these strange people, it suddenly dawned upon me that the name of their principal male deity, *Ön*, although, as I said, of a most un-Indian consonance, was not entirely unlike another god's name which I had heard before. Had I not come across something resembling it in a paper I had written some ten years ago on the pantheon of the ancient Assyro-Babylonians ?

When I got home that evening, I looked up that paper. Sure enough, the principal god of the Sumerians who gave their religion to the subsequent Semitic invaders of Mesopotamia, was called *An*, or in his semitized form *Anu*. Was this just a phonetic coincidence ? I decided I could find time to investigate so curious a resemblance.[4]

* * *

Before I go any further, it would be appropriate, I think, for me to give a brief outline of the Toda religion for the benefit of my readers who have not had occasion to consult Rivers' book.

On page 453, this author states : " It seems to me that the Todas have had a religion of a comparatively high order for people living in such simple circumstances. During a long period of isolation there has come about an overdevelopment of the ritual aspect of this religion. Year after year, and century after century, the priests have handed on the details of the ceremonial from one to another. The performance of the prescribed rites in their due order has become the all essential of the religion and the ideas connected with it have suffered. This is shown more clearly in the prayers, in which we have seen the prayer proper has gradually come to take a relatively subordinate position, and is even in danger of disappearing altogether, while the importance of the *kwarzam*[5] by which the sacred objects of the dairy are mentioned has been magnified. The dairy utterances, which were at one time definite prayers calling on the gods for help and protection, are now on their way to become barren and meaningless formulae."

Some further explanation is needed in order to understand the details of the Toda religion to which the above alludes.

To the layman visiting the Nilgiris for the first time, the Todas appear to be a pastoral people with an excessive religious respect for their herds of

[4] Romanization of Toda throughout this paper is in accordance with the following convention :—

ā = hàt.	ei = date.	h = aspirate.	tch = chap.	o = hot.	t = top.	v = vat.	dh = Greek delta.
a = hut.	ee = meet.	i = hit.	k = kit.	ö = word.	u = blue.	w = won.	gh = „ gamma.
b = best.	f = fun.	ai = bite.	l = lot.	oi = bɔy.	ů = cɔok.	y = yoke.	kh = „ chi.
d = do.	g = gɔne.	j = French.	m = me.	p = pot.	oo = moon.	z = zero.	th = „ theta.
e = met.	ng = ring.	dj = job.	n = no.	r = rot.	ű = French.	é = is simply tonic.	
		sh = she.		s = soon.			

[5] *See* further, next page.

great, big-horned buffaloes, some of which are sacred, and with an obsessional concern in the dairy operations of churning the milk and making butter from it.

A closer acquaintance will reveal that the tribe is divided into two moieties, one superior, the Tardharsh and the other inferior, the Teivilkh. Each of these moieties is again subdivided into clans or *modols* (from *mad*, village and *ol*, man).[6]

Sacred buffaloes are owned by persons in both moieties, the higher grade and the most numerous ones belonging however to the Tardharsh. They move in herds, each of which has a name, like the individual buffaloes too actually, being tended in what concerns the milking and the churning that follows by specially appointed priests, who alone are allowed to approach the sacred cattle.

The dairies in which the processing of the milk is done are of varying sanctity, corresponding to the degree of sacredness of the buffaloes which are tended in them. The dairies are each under the care of a priest-dairyman[7] who, curiously, in the higher grades, must belong to the lower Toda moiety, the Teivilkh.

Both the milking of the buffaloes and the processing of their milk in the dairies are done to the accompaniment of mechanically recited prayers or formulae, called *kwarshm* (Rivers' *kwarzam*), which the priest entones in a marked ritual tone. These consist of often unexplainably unusual names for the gods, local landmarks, dairy instruments, buffaloes, etc., called out in a high, sing-song voice, one after the other, with no other sequence than the prescribed traditional one. Such *kwarshms* are also recited at other religious occasions besides the ordinary daily dairy operations.

The following is a schematic list of the different types of dairies, disposed hierarchically, from the highest to the lowest grade, with the title of the priest who officiates in each of them :

Affiliation.	*Dairy.*	*Priest.*
Ti-mad (a religious institution comprising sacred buffaloes, grazing grounds, dairy and pen, belonging only to the leading Tardharsh clans).	*Poh* (used to be conical ; only one such dairy remaining at Öntö).	*Palol* (called a *patol* when out of office), assisted by a *kaltmokh.*
Tarar *modol* : only this Tardharsh clan has this type of dairy.	*Kugvali* ...	... *Kugvalikartmokh.*
Karsh *modol* : only this Tardharsh clan now retains such a dairy ; formerly, all Tardharsh clans had one.	*Kurpali* ...	... *Kurpalikartmokh.*

[6] *Toda* is Badaga, from *toda-ma*, headmen ; the Todas call themselves *Olkh*, men.
[7] Please see Editor's note 4 at p. 25.

Affiliation.	*Dairy.*	*Priest.*
All Tardharsh *modols*, except the Melgarsh clan.	*Wurjoli*	*Wurjol.*
All Tardharsh *mads*	*Tarvali* (the ordinary village dairy of the Tardharsh).	*Tarvalikartmokh.*
All Teivilkh *etumads* (chief *mads*)	*Kogvali*	*Palikartmokh.*
All Teivilkh *mads*	*Kirpali* (the ordinary village dairy of the *Teivilkh*).	*Palikartmokh.*

The Toda gods are very hazy figures. Rivers already mentions the fact, and also that they have been much more distinct in earlier times. What has happened is, as he says, that ritual has come to play so important a part in religious practice, that a clear conception of the deities is quite beyond the Toda mind to-day. An intricate and rich mythology—with which only some of the elders of the tribe are really familiar now—describes an early period in which the gods lived freely with men in the Nilgiris. They led the same kind of Toda pastoral life as nowadays, with buffaloes and dairies. Only some are reputed to be still present in the Blue Mountains, each living on the summit of a distinctive hill. They number roughly six hundred altogether, the principal ones, of which you hear most from the Todas, being the following :—

Ön (mentioned above) : Lord of the Underworld *(Amnor)*, to which he retired after a long period in the Nilgiris ; while still there, he created, together with his wife *Pinakursh*, men (*Olkh* = Todas), as well as the Toda buffaloes.

Terkish (Rivers' Teikirzi) : The sister of Ön, she is by far the leading Toda deity, amounting to a protecting mother-goddess of the tribe ; she is reputed to have stayed behind with the Todas when Ön retired to Amnor, and has her residence on the summit of the hill called *Tödhut* (near the Norsh mund, known in English as the Toda Cathedral). She is omnipresent, being found, the Todas will tell you, also in London and New York ; the Nilgiris are called in Toda after her: *Terkishnor* or the land of Terkish

Kwotën : A man-god, his fabulous life is closely associated with the Pan *modol*, one of the leading Tardharsh clans ; Rivers

believed him to be an outstanding Toda who was posthumously deified.

Kwoto : Another man-god, he is closely associated with the Melgarsh *modol* of the Tardharsh; among the legendary feats he accomplished was to tie down the sun between two mountains and take it to drink at a stream everyday, in order to prove to the gods, who had challenged him, that he possessed supernatural powers.

It is impossible in a paper of this kind to further enlarge upon the Toda religion. For more and fuller information, readers are referred to Rivers' book, which is a classic on the subject. All that has been attempted here is to give some idea of what it consists, with special reference to those points which will prove relevant in what follows, and which cannot be understood without such knowledge.

* * *

My curiosity awakened by the phonetic resemblance of the name of Ön with that of the Sumerian god An, I lost no time in investigating what were its possible implications. I, thus, very quickly discovered that Ön was only the everyday name of the deity, the colloquial term employed to designate him, but that his *kwarshm* in prayer was effectively *An*, and even *Anu* at times, akin to the semitized appellation of his Sumerian counterpart, as it appears in Mesopotamia after the Semitic conquests.

The sources from which I obtained this information are the following[8] :—

1. From Karnoz (45), chief of the Melgarsh *modol*, and Motsod (45, Rivers' Chud), also of the Malgarsh *modol.* At Melgarsh *mad* :

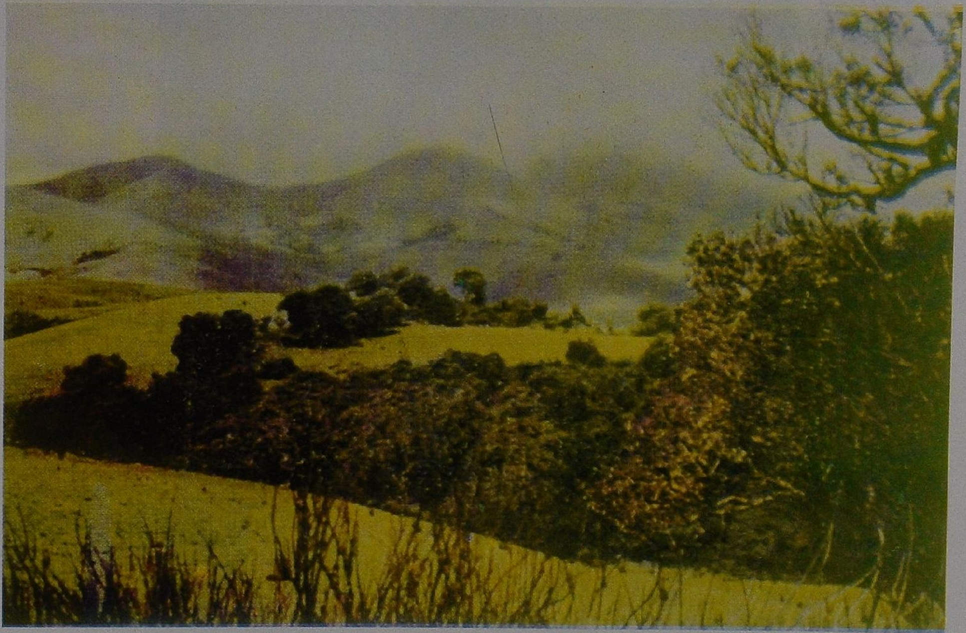
   " Ön is always called *ANU* when mentioned by his *kwarshm* in the prayers at the *poh* of the *ti-mad* of Öntö (near the Badaga village of Shollur, Rivers' Anto)."

2. From Öknarsh (8, Rivers' Arknersh), chief of the Karsh *modol*, and Kotlag (a Toda poet and composer) of Kwordhoni *modol.* At my Ootacamund bungalow :

   " Ön is referred to by his *kwarshm ANU* in the formula recited to cure somebody who has been bitten by a venomous snake."

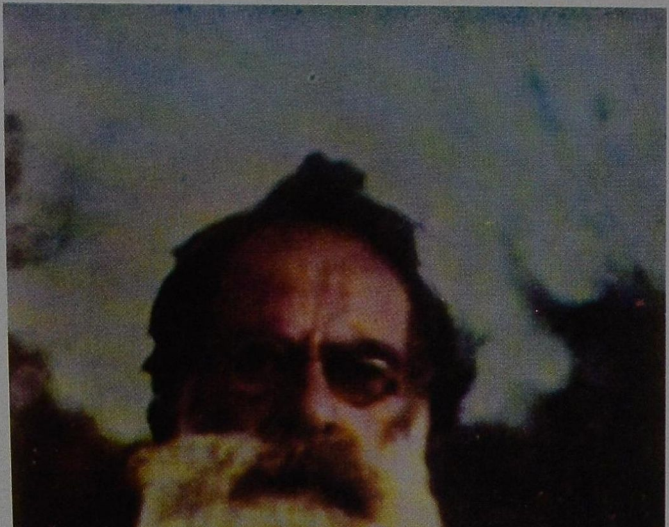
All attempts to obtain this formula failed, the informants stubbornly insisting that it would lose its power if revealed to me.

[8] When a number appears following the name of the informant, it is the one of the genealogical table in which Rivers refers to him at the end of his book. Those with no number are young men, presumably not born yet at the time (1902).



NO 1.—A VIEW OF THE NILGIRI RANGE. IN THE FOREGROUND, THE *ti-mad* OF MOR, BELONGING TO THE NORSH *modol*.

Cyan



NO. 2.—PORTRAIT OF ÖKNARSH, CHIEF OF THE KARSH *modol*.

3. From Kushodj of Omgarsh (Rivers' Kusharf) *modol* (he has thrice been *palol* at the *ti-mads* of the Norsh *modol*, and once *wurjol* at the conical *wurjoli* of the Norsh *mad*). At my bungalow :

" Ön is called by his *kwarshm AN* at the *poh* of the Öntö *ti-mad* ; but not Anu. (He admits that there may be some differences of pronunciation, but he personally utters the name as An). The *kwarshm* is as follows :—

AN, *AN*, *Kerje-Erje Ördh AN*, *Tirkish-Ishkt Ördh AN*", etc. (continuation as in Rivers, *op. cit.* p. 244 : " *Öntö Ördh AN*, *Odhevoh Ördh AN*," etc.) Translation : Ön, Ön, *kwarshm* of Terkish, other *kwarshm* of Terkish ; *Ördh* is the equivalent of " be glorified ", and *An* is as above, the *kwarshm* of Ön ; the rest as in Rivers, p. 224.

It seems that this first part of a *kwarshm* secured by Rivers, together with the exclamations *Ördh* and *An*, were not given to him by his informants, as it is an invocation to the gods which had been kept secret so far.

This *kwarshm* was sound recorded by me later, Pojodz speaking (*see* below).

4. From Kushodj (*see* above), and Pojodz of Kuur *modol* (he has repeatedly been *wurjol* at the *wurjoli* of the Or *mad* of the Norsh *modol*, and has also served at the *ti-mads* of Pan, although my notes do not make it quite clear whether it was as *palol* or as *kaltmokh*). In order to obtain this information, I was obliged to request the presence of Wunkwur (3, Rivers' Ungudr), headman of the Norsh *mad*, without whose permission the two men would not give up the secrets of the Norsh *modol*'s religious formulae. At my bungalow :

" When the *wurjol* closes the pen of the buffaloes at the *wurjoli* of Or, he recites a *kwarshm* (*see* below) which mentions Ön at the end under his *kwarshm* name of *AN*."

5. From Kaltmod (64, Rivers' Kalmad) of Pier *modol* (*patol* of the Norsh *modol ti-mads*, where he has totalled 25 years as *palol* at various intervals of time) and Karem (69) of Kiötar *modol* (Rivers' Keadr) (*patol* of the Pan *modol ti-mads*, where

he has served half his lifetime; he is now an old man of over seventy). These two men are the most experienced priests of the whole Toda tribe. Information from them came easily and surely—they really knew their stuff. At Apersgor *mad* (Rivers' Erpasgodr):

"In all the Norsh *ti-mads*, Ön is always referred to by his *kwarshm* of *ANU*".

6. From Mertchmarsh of Konorj *modol* (serves as *pohkartmokh* at the village *tarvali*, which here alone is conical and bears the name of a *poh*, as in a *ti-mad*; hence the name *pohkartmokh* here for the priest who, elsewhere, would be a plain *tarvali-kartmokh*). At Pishkwosht *mad*:

"Ön in the ritual of the *poh* here is always referred to by his two *kwarshm* names of *AN* and *ANU*."

(I was obliged to pass through a leech-infested forest between Pishkwosht and Konorj in order to get this information. Mertchmarsh did not seem to mind at all walking barefooted and barelegged through the foliage.)

Having had this measure of success in my investigations about An (Anu), I resolved to try and find out if other well-known deities of the ancient Sumerian pantheon were not also present in some of the other Toda *kwarshms*. I was by now feeling pretty desperate at my time in the Nilgiris running out quicker than I liked it to, as I felt that a really thorough study of the *kwarshms* would certainly yield much more.

I took up Ishtar next, the semitized form of Innini, the heaven virgin-goddess of Erech. Could it be, I thought, perchance, that the great, mother-goddess of the Todas, Terkish, sometimes bore that *kwarshm* name? To my astonishment and delight, it appeared very soon that it was so. Here is my evidence:

1. From Karnoz and Motsod (*see* above). At Melgarsh *mad*:

"The *kwarshm* of the Torshtar *mad* of the Karsh *modol*, which used to be where the St. Stephen's church now stands, is *ISHTAR-Erzwur*, and it is referred to as such in the prayers at the Karsh *kurpali*."

The connection with Terkish was explained to me as being that Torshtar was the *mad* at which the goddess gave the sacred buffaloes, the *martir*, to the Karsh *modol*, the

people of which have since commemorated that important event in prayer by linking her name with that of the mund.

2. From Kushodj (*see* above). At my bungalow :

"*ISHKIAR* is the usual *kwarshm* name for Terkish both in the house and in the dairy of my *mad*, Poln (known in English as Umbrella Tree). The *kwarshm* is as follows :—

Kerje-Erje, Tirkish-Ishkt, Ishkul-ISHKIAR, Tuvandu Polkhliog, Tuokh, etc."

Translation : *kwarshms* of Terkish, except the three last names which are *kwarshms* of the Poln *mad.*

Note that the *kwarshm* of Terkish is *Ishkiar* here, not Ishtar. This *kwarshm* was sound-recorded by me later, Kushodj speaking.

3. From Öknarsh and Kotlag (*see* above). At my bungalow :

"At Or *mad*, when the *wurjol* puts the bars up to close the pen at night, he recites a *kwarshm* in which Terkish is referred to as *ISHTAR.*"

4. From Kushodj and Pojodz in the presence of Wunkwur (*see* above). At my bungalow :

(*a*) "The *kwarshm* recited by the *wurjol* at Or as he puts up the bars of the *tu* (pen) at night is as follows :—

Morjkar, Munaerth, Tudardho, Podhervo, Kudvaivthov, Teirshtairsh, ISHTAR, Kogwumvo, Kodjvo, Karojer, Kianorkh, etc."

Translation : dairy area of Or, second such name, the pen, from the wood called *tur* (*Meliosma pungens*), the *poh*, twin pillars of the entrance to the pen, the *kwarshm* of Terkish, a bell, the other bell kept in the dairy, the *kwarshm* of all the buffaloes of the Norsh *modol*, second such name for the same, etc.

This *kwarshm* was sound-recorded by me later, Pojodz speaking.

(*b*) "The *kwarshm* of the extinct Torshtar *mad* (now St. Stephen's Church) is really *Toshtar-ISHTAR.*" (Note the absence of an r in this *kwarshm*).

(*c*) "In the *wurs-poh* (of the sacred buffaloes called *wursir*) of the (Pan) *ti-mad* of Utaror, Terkish is always mentioned by the *palol* by her *kwarshm ISHTAR.*"

5. From Kaltmod and Karem (*see* above). At Apersgor :

(*a*) " *ISHTAR* and sometimes *ISHKIAR* are the *kwarshms* of Terkish at the *ti-mad* of Utaror. It is as follows :—

Kirjen-Pirjen Ördh, *Pöikiush-Tödhu-Ördh*, *Tonir Ördh*, *Karnoz-Koreri Ördh*, *ISHTAR Ördh*, etc."

Translation : Two familiar Toda gods, *kwarshms* of the *poh* and of the *tu* (pen), the dairy stream, *kwarshm* of two bells kept in the dairy, *kwarshm* of Terkish, etc., followed by " be glorified " in every case.

This prayer is recited when the dairy lamp is being lighted by the *palol*.

(*b*) " Terkish is always referred to by her *kwarshm ISHTAR* in all the higher religious establishments of the Pan *modol*, and only of that *modol*."

(*c*) " The reason for which *ISHTAR* is used as the *kwarshm* of Terkish by the Pan *modol* in connection with the disaffected Torshtar mund (St. Stephen's Church) is that it formerly was a *ti-mad* of the Karsh *modol* which the Pan people used to share, until Kwotén gave them their own *ti-mad*. The Karsh and Pan *modols* to this day make use of that *kwarshm*, but only with reference to that *mad*."

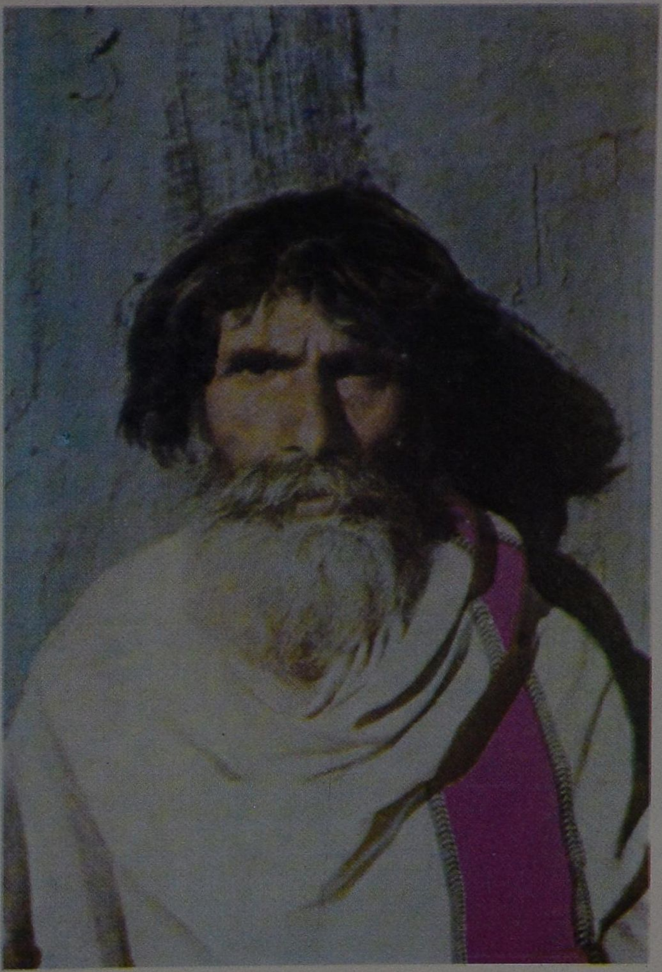
When I asked if *ISHTAR* is perchance a *kwarshm* of Terkish which the Pan people learnt from Kwotén, I was told that it was not, that the *kwarshm* is " older than Kwotén."

I was so impressed by these revelations, that I next undertook to investigate if there were other deities of a Sumerian consonance to be discovered in the Toda *kwarshms*. Thus it came about that from among the long list of names of the ancient pantheon of Sumeria, I still found the following appellations :—

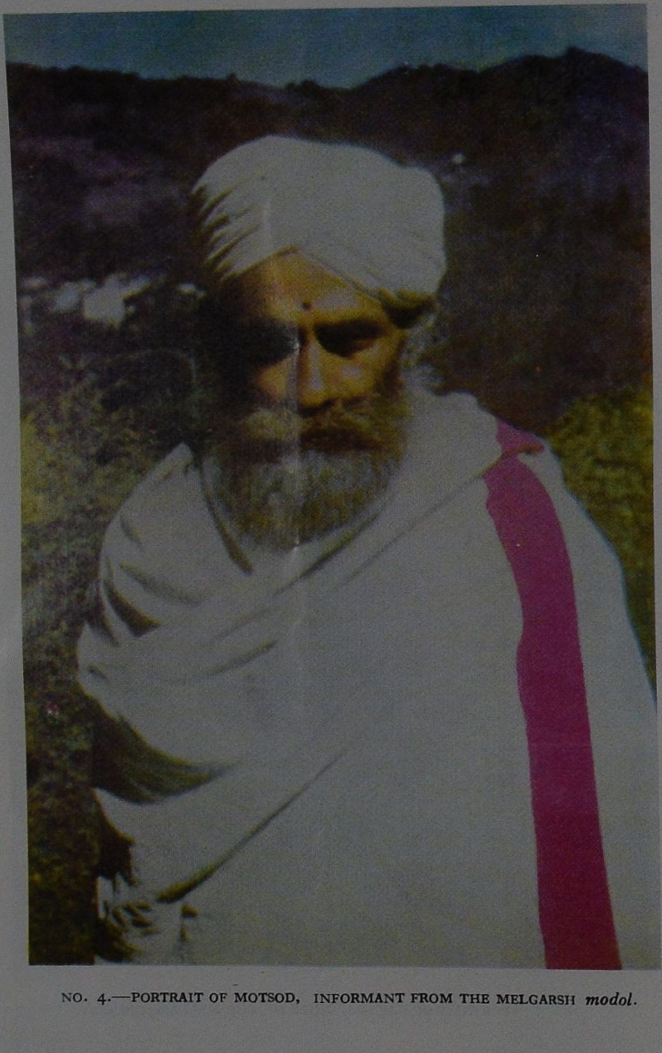
I. *INNINI*, the heaven goddess of Erech, also considered as a specialised aspect of Nintud, the virgin mother-goddess of engendering, semitized later into Ishtar, from the South Arabian Venus, Athar :

From Kaltmod (*see* above). In a wood at the 8/1 milestone of the Ootacamund-Gudalur road :

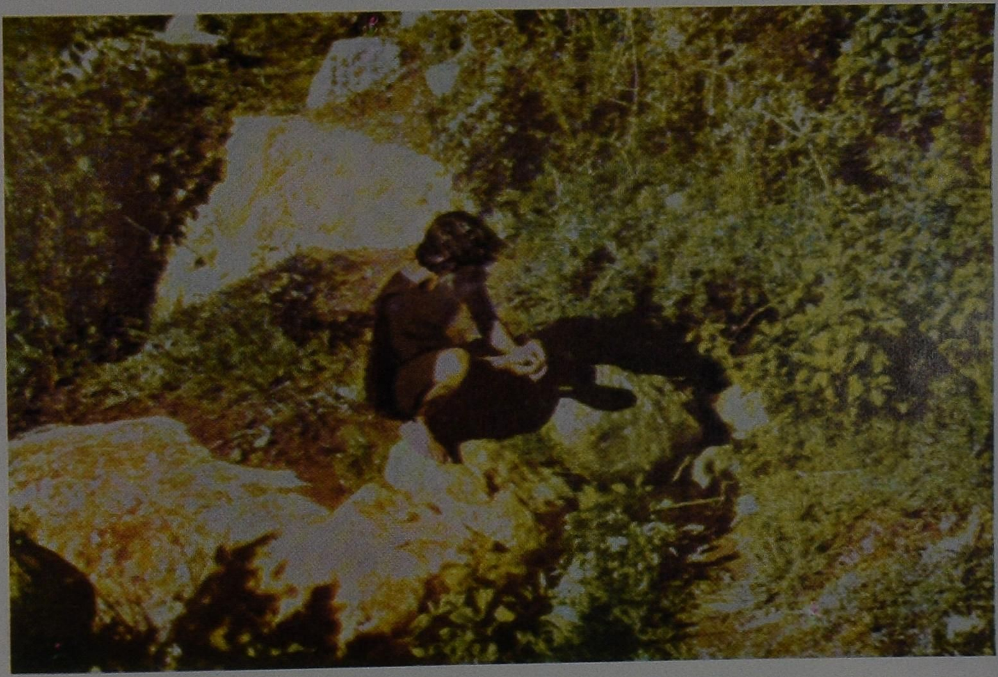
" *INNINI* is another name (not a *kwarshm*) for Terkish. She is often referred to colloquially in that way. Thus the Nilgiris, which are usually called *Terkishnor*, are sometimes also known as *INNINI nor*."



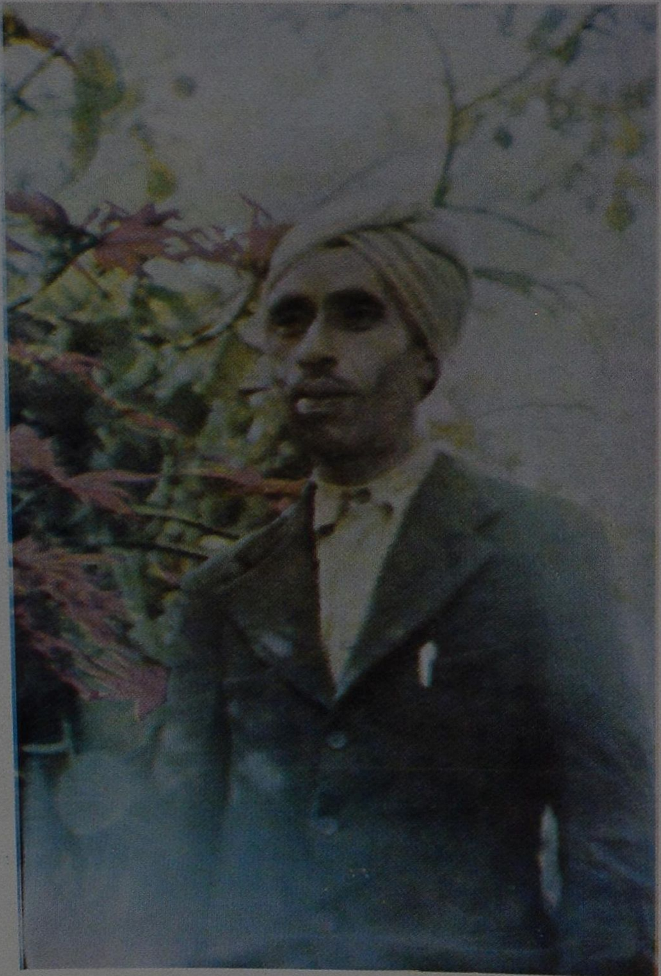
NO. 3.—PORTRAIT OF KARNOZ, CHIEF OF THE MELGARSH *modol*.



NO. 4.—PORTRAIT OF MOTSOD, INFORMANT FROM THE MELGARSH *modol*.



NO. 5.—MOTSOD PURIFYING HIMSELF IN A STREAM, BEFORE ASSUMING OFFICE AS *tarvalikartmokh* OF THE MELGARSH *mad*. NOTE THE *tuni* (WRAP).



NO. 6.—MY INTERPRETER, KANVARSATHI SUNDERDOSS.

II. *NINTUD*, the virgin mother-goddess of engendering :

1. From Öknarsh and Kotlag (*see* above). At my bungalow :

" During the October festival at Norsh (the Toda Cathedral), the officiating *wurjol* recites a *kwarshm* in which Terkish is called by her *kwarshm NINTUD*."

2. From Kushodj and Pojodz in the presence of Wunkwur (*see* above). At my bungalow :

" In everyday speech, Terkish is often referred to as *NINTUD*, out of respect."

No explanation was forthcoming as to why this was a more respectful form, my informants stating simply that it was like that.

III. *MAKH*, " The supreme goddess ", another Sumerian qualification for Nintud-Innini-Ishtar :

1. From Öknarsh and Kotlag (*see* above). At my bungalow :

" Terkish is evoked as *MAKH* by both the people of Karsh and of Pan when they cross the Kenatulkh river (also called Pakhwar ; in English, the Avalanche river) on their way to the Kundahs during the yearly migration to that part of the Nilgiris (south-east). This is her *kwarshm* name, given to her by Kwotén, when she herself crossed the river at the same spot."

2. From Kushodj and Pojodz, in the presence of Wunkwur (*see* above). At my bungalow :

" At Norsh, the *kwarshm MAKH* is always used to designate Terkish in the following prayer :—

Kai-MAKH, *Kwari-Kmun*, *Pursh*, *Uv*, etc."

Translation : Terkish the uncreated, the cairns on the summit of neighbouring Tödhut (the mountain where Terkish is reputed to dwell), *kwarshm* of Tödhut, *kwarshm* of the Norsh milking place, etc.

My notes omit to state if this prayer is said by the priests in the two dairies of *Norsh mad*, the *wurjoli* and the *tarvali*, or by the people in their houses or both.

This *kwarshm* was sound-recorded by me later, Pojodz speaking.

3. From Pilkor (16, Rivers' Pilkodr), chief of the Pan *modol*. He was called in on the request of Pojodz, who promised to let me have more Pan *kwarshms* if he was authorized to give them away to me by the chief of the clan; he subsequently never turned up however, no doubt frightened at having already said too much. So I had to interview Pilkor alone, but he proved quite informative, although not as well-versed in *kwarshms* as a priest would have been. At my bungalow:

   " *MAKH* is the *kwarshm* of Terkish at Pan. It is said by the *wurjol* when he lights the lamp in the evening in the *wurjoli*, and also when he puts the bars across the pen entrance at night. At the *ti-mad*, however, she is referred to as Pakh. When the sacred buffaloes of Pan migrate to the Kundahs, the *palol* calls upon Terkish by name, using her *kwarshm MAKH*, as the animals cross the Pakhwar (Avalanche) river."

4. From Kaltmod and Karem (*see* above). At Apersgor:

   " The *kwarshm* of Terkish which makes use of the term *MAKH* when the Pan people cross the Pakhwar river on their way to the Kundahs during the yearly migration there, is as follows:—

   Terkish-Tishkt Ördh, Kwelkhlinggarkh Ördh, An-Gon Ördh, Azo-Mazo Ördh, Kenatulkhl Ördh, Punon-MAKH Ördh, etc."

   Translation: Terkish, the goddess Tögörsh (to whom the Todas sacrifice calves), Ön, one or two familiar Toda gods (number depends on the *mad*, *see* Rivers, *op. cit.* p. 192), the Avalanche river, *kwarshm* of Terkish with an honorific prefix, etc., followed by " be glorified " in every case.

5. From Mertchmarsh (*see* above). At the Konorj *poh*:

"*MAKH* is the *kwarshm* I use in the *poh* for Terkish here."

IV. *ENLIL*, or sometimes *ELLIL*, the earth god :

1. From Öknarsh and Kotlag (*see* above), At my bungalow :

"*ELLIL*, not Enlil, is the name given to Terkish by all the Todas in the morning prayer which they say on awakening."

This information was given to me after much searching and consultation between my two informants. Note that the name of a Sumerian male deity has here become that of a Toda goddess, which can perhaps be explained by the hazy and confused condition to which precise knowledge of the gods has been reduced nowadays.

2. From Kaltmod (*see* above). In a wood at the 8-1 milestone of the Ootacamund-Gudalur road :

"*ENLIL* is the name of a mountain near Mitur, in the Wynad, the twin of Ninlil (*see* below)."

When questioned further, he reveals that Mitur has been abandoned as a *mad* a long time ago. There are only three of its former inhabitants left, of the Pietarl *modol*, all living now at Apersgor. This name was used as the *kwarshm* of the mountain by the Mitur inhabitants. Denies he has any knowledge of what it stands for.

V. *NINLIL*, consort of the former god :

1. From Karnoz and Motsod (*see* above). At Melgarsh *mad* :

"The usual *kwarshm* name for earth in all prayers is *NELU*."

Which may or may not be a corruption of Ninlil, I cannot say, but appears to me worth mentioning.

2. From Kaltmod (*see* above). In a wood at the 8-1 milestone of the Ootacamund-Gudalur road :

"*NINLIL* is the name of the other twin mountain at Mitur in the Wynad, where it used to be called upon by that *kwarshm*."

My interpreter, Kanvarsathi Sunderdoss (*see* below), here remarked that

this reminded him that he had often heard the name, as well as that of Enlil, mentioned in the songs sung at sacred dairy dances. He did not know before what they stood for.

VI. *UTU*, the Sun god :

1. From Karnoz and Motsod (*see* above). At Melgarsh *mad* :

"The sun in the tale of how Kwoto tied it down and took it to drink is always referred to by its *kwarshm UTWE*."

2. From Öknarsh and Kotlag (*see* above). At my bungalow :

"*UTWE* is also a name for the sun used colloquially."

3. From Wunkwur alone (*see* above). At my bungalow :

"The salutation to the sun performed every morning by the Todas (Rivers' *kaimukhti*) is accompanied by the following prayer :

Nör, UTWE, Utshvoinor, Pirsh, Sundiran, Surian, etc."

Translation : Sun, sun, who is risen, sun, moon (in Tamil), sun (in Tamil), etc.

4. From Pilkor (*see* above). At my bungalow :

"*UTU* is the usual name for the sun when talking." Note the difference of pronunciation in this case, carefully checked by me, and definitely more like the Sumerian name than in earlier cases.

5. From Mertchmarsh (*see* above). At Konorj :

"*UTU* is the *kwarshm* of the sun in this *poh*. It is also used in the tale of how Kwoto tied it down and took it to drink in the stream which is only one mile from here."

VII. *SIN*, the Moon god :

1. From Pilkor (*see* above). At my bungalow :

"*SIN* is the *kwarshm* of the moon at the *kurpali* of Kiuju (Rivers' Kuzhu, a Karsh *mad*). It is mentioned in connection with the crescent-shaped, gold bracelet which is kept in the *kurpali*, and which, once a year, is purified in milk at a special ceremony."

For reference to this bracelet, *see* Rivers *op. cit.*, p. 204. (Its legendary history is that it was dropped into a milking vessel at Kiuju by a crow that came from Gudalur.)

Now, here a doubt arose in my mind. The bracelet is made of gold, and the Toda honorific term for gold is just precisely *sin*. Could it be that Pilkor was mistaken in relating the word to the (moon) crescent-shape of the bracelet, as a *kwarshm* of the moon, rather than to the precious metal out of which the trinket is made ?

I was obliged to make further researches, and was fortunate in getting in touch with the until lately *kurpali-kartmokh* of the Kiuju dairy (he had recently had to relinquish his office because of the death of a member of his family, which made him ritually polluted, and therefore unable to fulfil his duties).

2. From Pilkhlien of Karsh *modol* (*kurpalikartmokh* for the last two years at Kiuju). At Apersgor :

(*a*) " *SIN* is the *kwarshm* of the moon at Kiuju, not of the golden bracelet. It may or may not bear any relation to the crescent-shaped trinket ; I cannot say. The *kwarshm* is the following :—

Kirjen-Pirjen Ördh, Terkish-Tishkt Ördh, Koronörsh-Punnogwirkh Ördh, Twur-dhueh, Ördh, Podhurvo Ördh, Morjvep-Ördh SIN-anorsh Ördh, Punanörsh Ördh, Pilkhlionördh Ördh, etc. "

Translation : Two familiar Toda gods, Terkish, *kwarshm* of Kiuju *mad*, the pen, the *kurpali*, holy buttermilk (usually called *pep*), the moon, the brightness of the bracelet, the whiteness of the bracelet, etc., followed by " be glorified " in every case.

(*b*) " *SIN*, besides is also the *kwarshm* of the moon at Karsh *mad*, where it is said daily both in the *kurpali* and *wurjoli*, and with no relation at all to any bracelet there."

Doubt cannot be entirely dissipated, of course, but the latter evidence does all the same tend to make one believe that there is such a *kwarshm* for the moon. That it happens to be phonetically identified with the Toda honorific word for gold may only be a coincidence,—an admittedly embarrassing one, but which should not keep us from seriously considering its Sumerian consonance.

VIII. *NINKURSHAG*, the "queen of the mountain";

1. From Kaltmod and Karem (*see* above). At Apersgor:

(*a*) "*NINKURSHAG* is a *kwarshm* used in all *ti-mads* when the *palol* lights the lamp in the *poh*; it is also said at the ceremony of milking a buffalo for the first time after its first calf. It is as follows:—

Kirjen-Pirjen Ördh, NINKURSHAG Ördh, Pungoi Ördh Punkotlag Ördh, etc."

Translation: Two familiar Toda gods, ? , milking vessel in the *poh*, churning stick in the *poh*, etc., followed by "be glorified" in every case.

Both informants, although most experienced Toda priests, disclaimed all knowledge of what was the meaning of Ninkurshag. They had learnt that *kwarshm* from their predecessors, they said but had not been enlightened as to what it referred to. I told them I could tell them what it was: that it was very ancient, some five thousand years old, the name of a Mesopotamian deity, who was the goddess of the mountains. Whereupon, they gave the characteristic Toda exclamation of wonder: "Ee Ha!", and Kaltmod added:

(*b*) "Then that is why we call out her name at the foot of either Kotdhet or Püth (mountains of the Nilgiri range) when we light the fire there, at the new moon of October!"

This was an allusion to a fire-lighting ceremony at the foot of those mountains, at which the *palol* and the *kaltmokh* of the Norsh *ti* officiate at the October new moon each year (Rivers' *Teutüsthchi* ceremony, p. 290).

Dusk was gathering as I finished interrogating the two old *patols*. I looked around me at the green landscape that rolled down from where we sat, down, two thousand feet to the Paikara river below, and up again on the other side, towards, the west, to the soaring, nearly nine thousand feet heights, of the Nilgiris. Great, big-horned,

sacred Toda buffaloes were slowly converging towards us to be milked, and a little cold breeze had sprang up which made me put on my scarf and leather jerkin that I had discarded when the warm Indian sun was shining earlier overhead.

Looking at the noble, bearded faces of my patriarchal-like informants, I could not help wondering at the apparent enormous longevity of the gods. Here, in a lost tribe of barely five hundred so-called, aborigines, the appellations of the ancient deities of Sumer, Akkad, Babylon and Assur seemed to live on, when those who had first echoed their inspiring names had long ago turned to dust and air in the flood-swept plain Between the Rivers.

As my Toda interpreter and I rose to go, we heard the frightened bleatings of a jungle goat in a *sholla* (wood) above, ringing out in that particular tone which it assumes only when the dangerous presence of a roaming tiger is sensed close by. It was all very strange and impressive.

2. From Kaltmod (*see* above): In a wood at the 8-1 milestone of the Ootacamund-Gudalur road:

(*a*) " After the *palol*, assisted by the *kaltmokh*, has lit the fire at the foot of one of the two mountains, he recites the following *kwarshm*:

> *Kirjen-Pirjen Ördh An, Terkish-Tishkt Ördh An, NINKURSHAG Ördh, An, Puth Ördh An, Kotdheu Ördh An, Koibudheu Ördh An, Elkeu Ördh An,* etc., the *kwarshm* names of many other *teu* (gods) following."

Translation: Two familiar Toda gods, Terkish, ? (he now says I must be right and that Ninkurshag must be a mountain *teu*), another mountain god, the mountain of that name, another mountain god, yet another mountain god, etc., all followed by " be glorified " and the *kwarshm* of Ön in every case.

This *kwarshm* was sound-recorded by me later, Kaltmod speaking.

(*b*) " *NINKURSHAG* is mentioned in the *kwarshm* of all *ti-mads*."

When asked if this is also the case of the *ti* of Kwordhoni

(the most easterly outlying *mad*), he answers that he does not know as he has never been *palol* to the *arjair* (the sacred buffaloes of the Kwordhoni *ti-mad*). He adds that nobody has ever known what it meant before I told him.

IX. *NINURTHA*, the war god: From Kaltmod (*see* above). In a wood at the 8-1 milestone of the Ootacamund-Gudalur road:

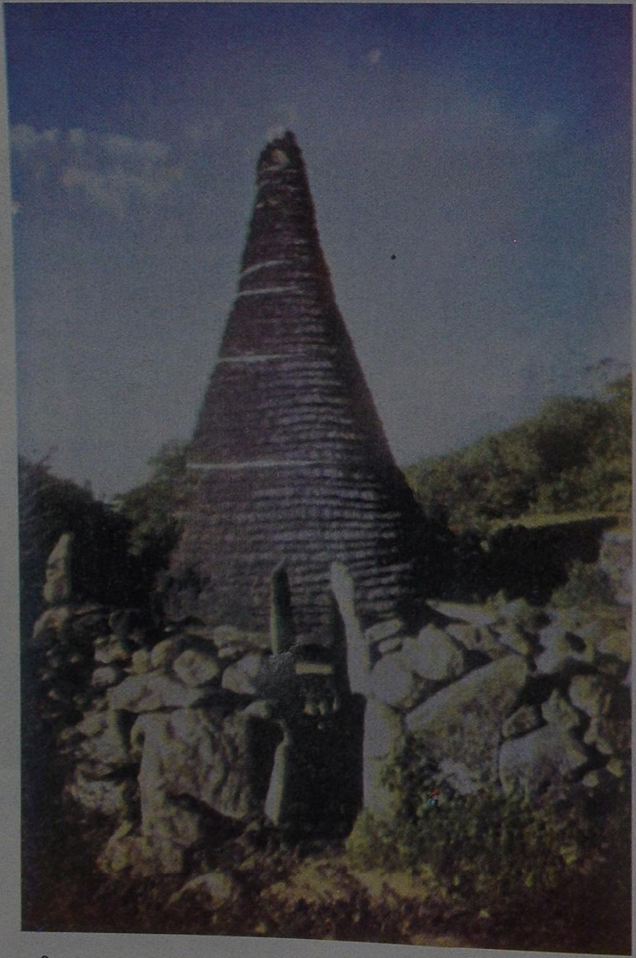
" *NINURTHA* was the name of a *teu* (god) which the people of the now extinct Mitur *mad* in the Wynad used to worship. His name was mentioned in olden days in the *kwarshms* of the Norsh *tis*, although for what reason is not known." Karkievan (63), he says, when *palol* of the *tiir* (sacred buffaloes of the Norsh *ti-mad*) at Mor, still recited it, and he, Kaltmod, learnt it from him there " before I had a beard." It is never used any longer now.

Efforts to discover other Sumerian gods' names in Toda *kwarshms* failed. I was notably unable to find any traces of anything remotely resembling Ea or Enki, the water god of Eridu, and his consort Damkina; Marduk, the great god of Babylon, son of Ea; Nusku, the fire god, son of Enlil; and any of the lesser deities such as Ashan (Nidaba, Nisaba), the grain goddess; Ninkasi, the wine goddess; Ninkharburvildu, the goddess of expiatory rites; and Immer, the rain and thunder god. Nor were there any remains to be identified with the Igigi deities of the upper world, or with the Annunaki gods of the under world (Nergal and Erishkigal).

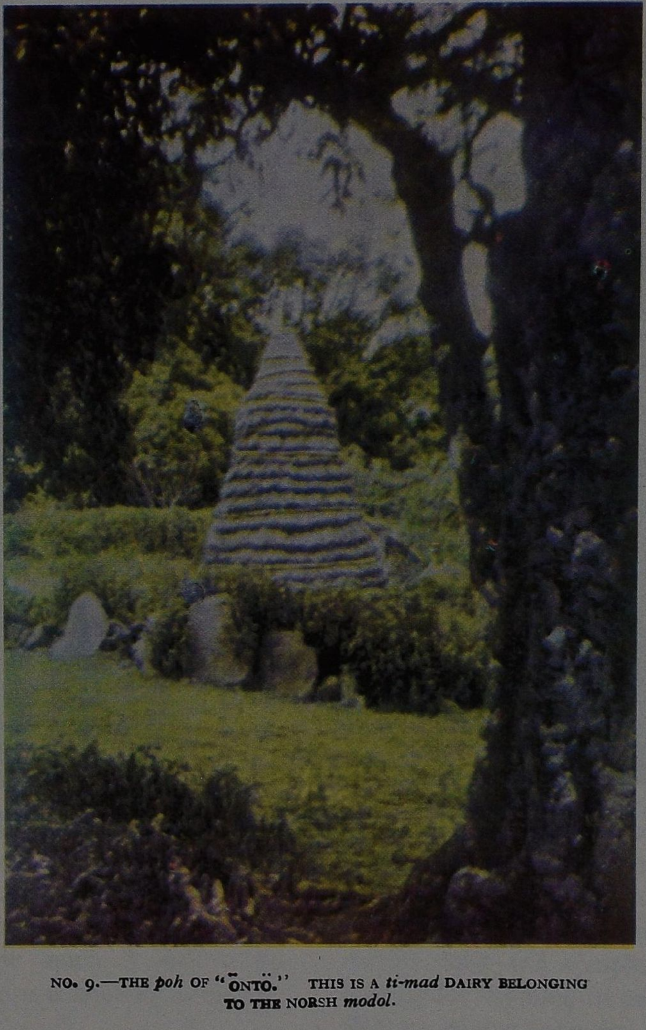
The most significant thing about this is, I think, that, as far as I know, Ea and Marduk are conspicuously absent from the Toda *kwarshms*. Should this by any chance mean that their ancestors, if they did have some contact with Sumeria, had so before the cult of Marduk at Babylon was firmly established, i.e., after the first Babylonian Dynasty (2169-1870 B.C.)? Or does it mean that these possible forerunners had no contacts with the port of Eridu on the Gulf (where Ea was worshipped), or with Babylon further north, but did have so with other regions of Mesopotamia?

These speculations are conjectural, naturally, but they may be an indication of the time and place of early relations between the people who are today called Todas and what may have been their ancient Sumerian kinsmen. Such contact, if I am right in presuming for

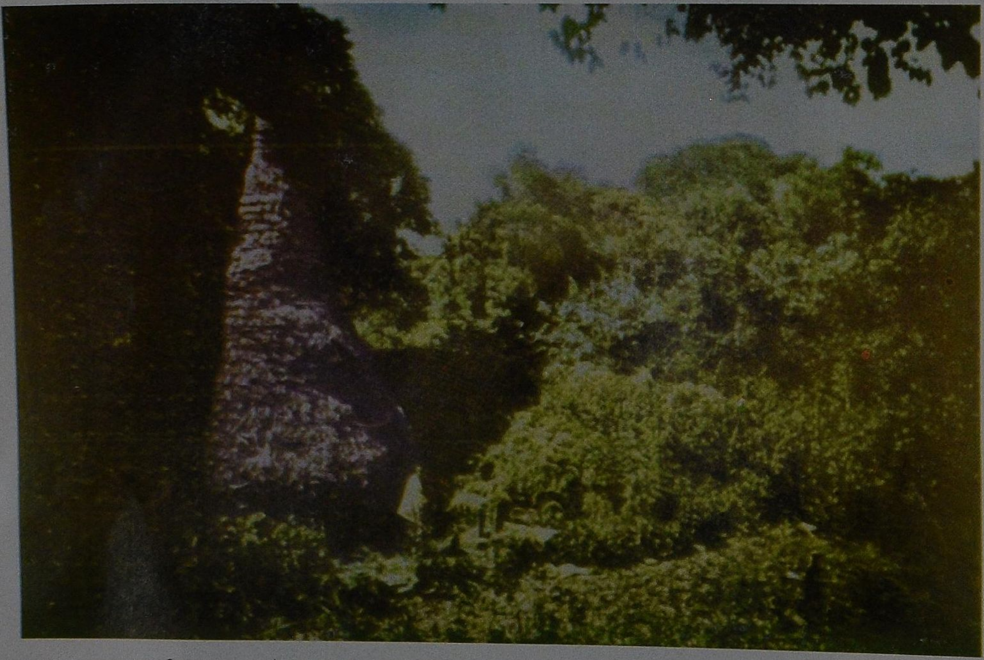
NO. 7.—THE KARSH *mad* (IN BADAGA, KANDALMUND). FROM LEFT TO RIGHT *wurjoli*, THE *kurpali*, AND THREE LIVING HUTS OF THE *mad* ARE TO BE SEEN.



NO. 8—THE *poh* OF NORSH. THIS *poh* IS A *wurjoh*. IN ENGLISH, IT IS KNOWN AS THE TODA CATHEDRAL, IN BADAGA AS MUTTANAD.



NO. 9.—THE *poh* OF "ŌNTÖ." THIS IS A *ti-mad* DAIRY BELONGING TO THE NORSH *modol*.



NO. 10.—THE *poh* AT KONORJ (IN BADAGA, DEVARMUND). THIS *poh* IS A *tarvali*. THE SILHOUETTE OF MY INFORMANT MERTCHMARSH IS JUST VISIBLE IN A WHITE *putkuli* (WRAP) TO THE RIGHT OF THE CONICALDAIRY.

a minute of it from the evidence above, would then have taken place not later than the end of the third millennium B.C., and with those parts of Mesopotamia which exclude Eridu and Babylon, or with people of that time from those regions. The survival of the names of gods and goddesses in Sumerian as well as in Semitic consonance among the Todas would point also to a very early antiquity.

My interpreter throughout my work in the Nilgiris, both for my principal investigations into the marital customs of the tribe and in the side-line which the incidental research described above represents, was Kanvarsathi Sunderdoss, a Christian Toda convert, originally lent to me by Miss C. F. Ling, head of the Church of England Zenana Mission, in 1939. Well-liked by the non-Christian Todas, with whom he has kept intimately in contact, animated by what can be described as Toda nationalism, no one was more enthusiastic about these curious discoveries than he. To Badaga hillmen, who questioned us as to who the Todas were and where they had come from, he proudly answered "Now we know who we are. We are Babylonians!" I wish to place on record how much I owe to his invaluable help and untiring devotion.

* * *

While making full reserve for possible snags in the evidence collected as described above, I nevertheless look upon the results as quite revealing. That which one should guard oneself most carefully against in such an investigation is, of course, phonetic resemblances between the names of Sumerian gods and Toda *kwarshms* totally unrelated to the deities. It was for that reason that I took so much care to look thoroughly into the *kwarshm* Sin, allegedly for the moon at Kiuju, but at the same time phonetically identical with the Toda honorific word for gold, the metal out of which the crescent-shaped bracelet kept in the *kurpali* is made. It will have been seen that a strong case does exist all the same for the *kwarshm* being that of the moon, although I suppose that a certain doubt lingers on, in spite of everything.

Then one should also be wary of Toda informants who, when asked if they know such and such a name, want to oblige and answer that they do, and then proceed to describe some slightly similar *kwarshm* in order to please one. An ideal method to avoid this would be, instead of questioning them as I did, to record the Toda *kwarshms* in the dairies, fully and completely, without looking for anything in particular, and then examining these for any evidence of Sumerian survivals. They are however numerous practical difficulties in

doing this ; difficulties which all previous field workers among the Todas have met with.

The main obstacle to overcome is the Toda reluctance to reveal what the sacred *kwarshms* are. Even among tribesmen, the priest keeps the secret of the prayers he says very closely indeed. Rivers states in his book (*op. cit.*, p. 214) : " In all cases the prayer is uttered 'in the throat' so that the words cannot be distinguished by anyone who may hear them. Whenever I listened to the recital of a prayer as it was being offered by a dairyman within the dairy I only heard a gurgling noise in which no words could be distinguished." That no doubt accounts for the fact that nobody so far, not even Rivers, was able to detect the Sumerian consonance of certain *kwarshms*.

Rivers goes on to say (p. 217) that only " with much difficulty I succeeded in obtaining the prayers of four village dairies ". Partly for these reasons, and partly because time did not allow for a method that would have been much more lengthy, I adopted the most obvious way of finding out, namely, that of asking the most qualified Todas if they had such Sumerian names among the *kwarshms* they used for their gods in the dairies.

The fact that it has been possible for me to discover as many as eleven Sumerian appellations for their gods, does, I think, considerably diminish the chances of my having gone astray. The resemblance between the Sumerian An and the Toda Ön would obviously not have been enough. Then the *kwarshms* were never given without some explanatory details, the nature of which, as for instance in the case of Ninkurshag, make it, in my opinion, less probable that I was being taken in. Information, too, gathered from a number of independent informants, seems rather to confirm the results obtained than otherwise.

Having strong suspicions, thus, that the Todas are somehow connected with ancient Sumeria, it is natural now to ask oneself what this means. For a long time, of course, many—especially archæologists—have believed in a former connection between India and Mesopotamia, as numerous indications, mainly from excavations, seems to show. Nothing " alive " however has been discovered, and it looks as if this evidence is the first of its kind in that direction.

It is known that teak wood, which is still an important Malabar product, was used by the Sumero-Assyro-Babylonians. Ruins of temples in Mesopotamia have revealed this. Ships too, in these early times, appear often to have been built of teak, the rot-resisting

wood of India. A lively trade between the head of the Persian Gulf and the coast of India certainly did exist in antiquity—as seals found at Mohenjo Daro and Harappa testify—but no one is yet quite sure if this took place by land or by sea.

In any case, it is not excluded that merchants from Sumeria were established in India for trade purposes, and the Todas may be the only living descendants left of such expatriated buyers. For some reason which is not known, a Sumero-Assyro-Babylonian colony may have been cut off in India and, unable to return home, settled down as best as it could in the land in which it found itself stranded. Its members may have found the way up to the Nilgiris, where the climate is so much healthier, and having assured their livelihood with the help of buffaloes, proceeded to organize themselves in the highlands in the way in which we find them existing to-day.

A certain amount of conservatism was probably prevalent among them, as is to be expected in a people of so distinguished a past. But having to a large extent lost their ancient religion, they eventually came to add to its confused remnants the worship of the buffaloes to which they owed their continued survival.

Thus Rivers' hypothesis of an immediate Malabar origin of the Todas should not, I think, be altogether rejected. There are points in what the Todas told me in the course of this investigation which seem to fit in with what he suggests. Kaltmod (64) for instance, mentions Mitur as a mund in the Wynad which has ceased to exist, and which was the only Toda one remaining to worship still Enlil, Ninlil and Ninurtha. In the east, on the other hand, at the munds of Kwordhoni and Konorj, only very few Sumerian *kwarshms* are to be found, as if most of them had been left behind in the migratory movement from the west. The Todas themselves, although admitting, as Emeneau has reported, that the Gudalur settlement was a recent one, do tell you that they have ancient *pattas* (lands) at Masinigudi (to the north-west, on the Mysore plateau) which they no longer inhabit or even visit.

This does not mean that Emeneau is wrong in stressing the importance of a generalized South Indian culture as a background for the Toda pattern. The tribe has apparently been for centuries in the Nilgiris, and much acculturation to the surrounding civilization has naturally taken place. The sacred buffaloes and the dairy ritual are however special to them, a reflection of the pastoral life which the Todas have

developed in what was once the more arid Blue Mountain highlands.

The problem of hundreds of other Toda gods and the names of the main deities is one that remains to be solved. That Ön is a deformation of An seems fairly possible. But how is one to account for the name *Terkish* of the mother-goddess, or, for instance for *Pinakursh*, the consort of Ön ?

All said and done, it would be perhaps too much to state definitely that the Todas have a Sumerian origin. That they have Sumerian names for some of their gods is no real proof that they once upon a time came from Mesopotamia. In our own Christian religion, we have the Old Testament which speaks of Abraham, the patriarch who migrated from Ur, and yet our ancestry is not Sumerian. We have had a religious connection with the Jews which accounts for this, and likewise, the presence of the names of Sumerian deities in the religion of the Todas may only be an indication of an ancient religious link of these people with Mesopotamia.

The discovery accounted for here does, I feel, throw some sort of light on the lasting riddle of the Todas' past. A ray has now penetrated the darkness of their history, one that can perhaps be followed up and made to shine on other aspects of it. It is for those with a greater knowledge of such questions than I to take up the matter. And they should do so quickly, if more is to be found, before the dwindling Toda tribe, its strange gods and its mysterious *kwarshms* die out, as they are, alas ! doing fast.

NOTES BY THE EDITOR.

1. Reed huts with arched roof have been suggested by drawings and sculptures from several Mesopotamian sites (*IRAQ*, II, p. 31). The barrel-shaped huts of the marsh-dwelling tribes of modern Iraq (*see* Field, H., " The Anthropology of Iraq—The Lower Euphrates-Tigris Region ", *Anthropological Series*, Field Museum of Natural History, 30, part 1, No. 2, 1949) are also somewhat similar to the Toda huts and are more difficult to make than other types of huts in vogue in the immediate neighbourhood of the Todas. If the Sumerian hypothesis of the origin of the Todas is correct we might say that the conservatism of the Todas led to the persistence of the Iraqi domestic architecture in the Nilgiris. That these barrel-shaped type of buildings were at one time more widespread in western and southern India is shown by their sculptural representation in several Buddhist monuments of great antiquity.

While making this reference to modern Iraq, I may add that the water buffalo is an animal of great economic importance to the tribes of Iraq as they are to the Todas.

2. To the list of parallel Toda and Malabar customs given at pp. 2-3, I would add the use of the arrow in the *tali* ceremony of Malabar and in the paternity ceremony of the Todas; and also the existence in both the areas of a basic matrilineal sib organization along with patriliny and polyandry. This peculiarity of the social organization of the Todas was an important discovery made by Dr. M. B. Emeneau but he was not aware of the Malabar parallel for it (*see* my paper " Iravas and Culture Change ", *Madras Museum Bulletin*, General Series, V. i 1944).

3. This may be an instance of glossolalia or " speaking tongues ", common under the stress of high emotional excitement during religious meetings.

4. The acts of self-discipline and renunciation of the *Palol* remind us of the Hindu ascetic. Elements of Indian asceticism go back to the Harappa culture.

5. Plates 1, 5, 7 to 10 got reversed, unfortunately, during the process of block-making.